

Sophia Rollins House
Farm Route W
Smithville
Clay County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1226

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MO,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MO-1226

SOPHIA ROLLINS HOUSE

Location: .5 miles north of Farm Route W, .8 miles east of its intersection with Farm Route F, approximately 3.5 miles northeast of Smithville, Smithville Vicinity, Clay County, Missouri.

USGS Smithville Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15.367490.4365000.

Present Owner: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District.

Present Occupants: Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Quinn.

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: The Sophia Rollins House is one of the few remaining mid-nineteenth century brick structures in the Smithville vicinity. Patented in 1836, the property was owned by Sophia Rollins and her family for the next forty-five years. Although it cannot be determined just when in that span this house was built, the style and form indicate a mid-century date. The quality of its brick construction and interior woodwork, including a graceful winding staircase, makes this house a model of craftsmanship for its time and location.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1850.
2. Architect and builder: unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: In the following transactions, the property conveyed includes the NW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Section 7, Township 53, Range 32.

Patent dated February 17, 1836. U.S.A. to Sophia Rollins.

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Deed Book 33, page 71, dated September 25, 1869. O.P. Moss, Sheriff of Clay County, under a sale in partition of the lands of Sophia Rollins, deceased, to T.K. Hulse.

Warranty Deed Book 40, page 455, dated September 17, 1853, recorded March 9, 1875. P.K. Hulse and Charlotte, wife, to W.P. Rollins. \$500.

Mortgage Book 37, page 206, dated February 5, 1876, recorded February 7, 1876. William P. Rollins and Rose E., wife, to Richardson Hulse. \$345. Release granted February 25, 1880.

Deed of Trust Book 48, page 123, dated February 4, 1880, recorded February 25, 1880. William P. Rollins to Joseph H. Heathman, Trustee for Richardson Hulse. \$950. Release granted March 29, 1887.

Warranty Deed Book 52, page 218, dated May 26, 1881, recorded August 5, 1881. William P. Rollins and Rose E., wife, to John S. Bernard and Susan V., wife. \$1,900.

Roy E. Brown, who had acquired the property in 1962 from Claude E. Porter, sold it to the U.S. government in 1976.

4. Original plan and construction: Oral histories have indicated that the wood frame rear ell was the original or early portion of the house. It was a common practice in Missouri to build a major building incorporating a smaller one in a T or L plan. Evidence of this happening here consists of two perpendicular hand-hewn beams in the rear wing, one running north-south along the foundation wall to meet the rear exterior brick "addition." Mac Porter, son of the owner from 1920-1962, stated that the rear ell had been extensively remodeled in the 1940s and that its other structural members would be likely to be new.

The form and style of the front brick portion provide several clues to its origin. The center hall, single pile plan with interior end chimneys and gable returns points to a mid-nineteenth century date. The interior features a central winding staircase in walnut, with simple, well-crafted details. Other interior woodwork is similarly simple and smooth.

An interior door leading to the second-floor bedroom was hand grained to resemble two woods. This door is probably original, as its simple style is compatible with the other woodwork in the house.

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The fireplace in the second floor west room has a segmental arch and is off center to the mantel and chimney breast. The mantel, which is the exact width of the chimney breast, is probably original.

The windows on the north (front) and west facades differ markedly from those on the south (rear) facade. The south facade windows have 8" wood lintels. The north and east facade windows are narrower, larger and have no lintels. The first floor windows have brick jack arches, while those on the second floor, only inches away from the roofline, have none. On the interior, the second floor north and east windows are only about one foot above the floor. It would appear that the north and east windows were elongated some time after construction to fit prevailing Victorian taste.

5. Alterations and additions:

- a. The front doors at the first and second levels both have ornate woodwork and glass panels, the one on the second floor being etched. These doors are probably not original to the house, and could date as late as the early twentieth century.
- b. According to Mac Porter, the present front porch was added soon after his father acquired the property in 1920.
- c. In the 1940s the rear ell was widened on the west side as part of a major renovation, according to Mac Porter. Physical evidence of this is seen both in the foundation wall, where there is a change in mortar, and in the attic crawl space, where there are remains of a steeper roof pitch.
- d. Two of the original four fireplaces have been closed off and the present residents are planning to close the third. Heating was originally supplied by the fireplaces. During the time the Porter family lived there, individual stoves were used throughout. The heating system was changed to hot water baseboard heat in the 1960s. The living room fireplace has been unreconizably altered.

B. Persons Connected with the Structure:

Sophia Rollins was born Mary Sophia Kennedy on June 6, 1777, on the eastern shore of Maryland. In 1797, she married Joshua

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Rollins, who died in 1801, leaving her with three young children. In 1830, she came to Clay County, Missouri, accompanied by her youngest child, a son named Lee Rollins, who married Susan Penn. They had fourteen children.

Sophia Rollins received a patent for this land in 1836, when she was almost 60 years old. Her son might have built a house for her right away, but if so, it probably was not this one. This brick house, though, was almost certainly built by the time she died, on May 6, 1868. She is buried half a mile northwest of the house.

At a sheriff's sale held to partition the property, Pleasant K. Hulse bought the house and land. He was married to Charlotte Rollins, one of Sophia's many granddaughters. In 1873, Hulse sold the property to William Penn Rollins, his brother-in-law. Rollins mortgaged the property twice to another brother-in-law, Richardson Hulse, who had married W.P. Rollins' sister Catherine. Finally, in 1881, Rollins sold the house out of the family.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books, Recorder of Deeds, Clay County Courthouse, Liberty, Missouri. Abstract on property for Preston Williams, Esq., North Kansas City, Missouri.

2. Interviews:

Brown, Roy E. Most recent property owner. Telephone interview August 15, 1978.

Denny, James. Architectural historian, Missouri SHPO office, Jefferson City, Missouri. Telephone interview, August 21, 1978.

Eldredge, William. Recorder of Deeds and Historian, Clay County Historical Society. Telephone interview, August 14 and 21, 1978.

Kuehn, Sigfried. Architect and member of the Clay County Landmarks Commission. Telephone interview August 14, 1978.

Porter, Mac. Son of Claude Porter, property owner 1920-1962, Kearney, Missouri. Telephone interviews August 18, 21, and 23, 1978.

Quinn, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar. Present occupants, August 17, 1978.

Williams, Preston. Lawyer representing Roy Brown, North Kansas City, Missouri. August 17, 1978, and telephone interview July 10, 1979.

3. Secondary Sources:

Melnick, Robert, principal investigator. "Architecture of the Smithville Lake Area." Contract study conducted by Kansas State University, College of Architecture, May, 1977.

Prepared by Kathryn A. Burns
Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Sophia Rollins House is characterized by a one room deep central hall plan. Large chimneys are incorporated in the end walls of this mid-nineteenth century brick structure.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The brick rectangle, three bays wide and two stories high, measures 24' across the front and is 17'3" deep. There is a one-story ell, making an L-plan.
2. Foundations: The brick portion has a brick foundation. The rear ell has combination concrete block and/or rubble stone foundation walls or stone piers. The basement on the south end of the ell has a stone foundation wall 14" wide.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: The two-story block has brick walls laid in common bond, with five to seven rows of stretchers between rows of headers, 14" thick. The ell is covered in wood siding. All walls are painted white with dark blue trim.

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4. Structural system: The two-story block has three structural bays in a transverse direction with brick bearing walls. The exterior walls are 14" thick and interior walls are 9'9-1/2" thick. The ell has frame bearing walls. There are two 8" x 7" hand-hewn beams in the basement; one runs from the south wall of the basement to the two-story block; the other is perpendicular to the first, running along the north wall of the basement.
5. Porches: The front porch has a rough stone-faced concrete block wall with four 18" square columns across the front of the same stone. The concrete floor is approximately 2-1/2" above grade, with a concrete step. The hip roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The bulkhead has poured concrete walls with worn stone steps.
6. Chimneys: There are end chimneys at both east and west ends of the two-story block. There is a brick chimney in the center of the ell along the ridge.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: On the north elevation there are two center doors, one on each floor, which have mill work designs and shutters.
 - b. Windows: On the north and east elevation of the brick two-story block, the openings are 36" x 68" with 1-5/8" trim, one-over-one lights, double hung sashes, jack arches, and shutters. On the north (front) windows, there are king closers along one edge of the brick opening. The south windows have 8" deep wood lintels with 5" wood trim and a 45" x 64" opening. There are one-over-one lights and a double-hung sash. In the ell, the east elevation has a 36" x 68" opening, and the south elevation a 28" x 39" opening.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The two-story block has a gable roof. The ell has a gable roof with small shed. Both are covered with asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The two-story block has returns on the gable ends. There are new metal gutters.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is no basement under the main brick portion of the house. A finished concrete basement does exist directly under the rear kitchen. This area houses the heating apparatus and is accessible through a rear ground-level cellar door.

All other areas under the rear frame portion have a shallow crawl space under the floor joists.

- b. First floor/second floor: The front brick portion of the house is a two story, single pile central hall plan with a living room to the east and what now is used for a bedroom to the west on the first floor. Two bedrooms, one to the east and one to the west, are off the hallway on the second floor.

South of the front living room space is the wood frame portion with a dining area and a kitchen directly beyond.

The front central hallway extends back beyond the brick section of the house and connects the dining room with a small bathroom to the west. Off the southwest corner of the dining room there is a narrow laundry/utility room addition running north-south along the west wall of the house. This space was thought to have originally been a side porch.

2. Stairways:

- a. The central staircase winds gracefully up to the second floor. The detailing is very simple with a solid piece walnut newel post and simple turned ballusters. Little decoration is found along the stair support excepting a carved beading detail.
- b. The exterior cellar stairs off the kitchen lead to the basement.

- 3. Flooring: There is wall-to-wall carpeting of linoleum throughout.

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4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are brick with a lath and plaster covering. The ceilings are plaster. The second floor east bedroom is an exception, with heavy painted wallpaper attached to the plaster; the ceiling has heavy paper attached with battens.
5. Doors and doorways: The two front doors on the first and second floors have large upper glass panes, with the second floor one having colored glass trim surrounding the large frosted pane. Both have lower raised panels. On the exterior both have elaborate applied carving with a severe gothic appearance.

The two second floor bedroom doors were at one time hand grained. The door on the west is relatively intact while the east bedroom door has been painted over.

6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Baseboard hot water heat.
 - b. Lighting: All rooms have relatively modern overhead light fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Sophia Rollins house stands alone on a prominent site facing north. House is surrounded by open fields.
2. Outbuildings: There are a barn and three other small outbuildings.

Prepared by Bethanie C. Grashof
Project Supervisor
Kathryn A. Burns
Historian
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Smithville Survey was undertaken in 1978 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Kansas City District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of the Smithville Dam and Reservoir. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, the documentation was prepared on site by Project Supervisor Bethanie Grashof (HABS Office); Historian Kathryn A. Burns (George Washington University); Foreman Darl Rastorfer (University of Pennsylvania); and student architects Kimberly I. Merkel (University of Virginia), Leonida Cubellis (Syracuse University), Jeffrey M. Laufer (Temple University), Barney H. Silver (University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee), and Douglas R. Taylor (Auburn University). Work on the drawings was continued in the HABS office by Ms. Grashof and Peter Darlow (McGill University), and completed by Mr. Taylor in 1979. The data was edited in the HABS office in 1979 by Alison K. Hoagland (George Washington University).